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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: HUMANITARIAN PLANNING TEAM VISIT HIGHLIGHTS NEED
FOR STRENGTHENED UN/GOJ COORDINATION AND LOW-KEY CIV-MIL
COORDINATION

REF: A. STATE 40450

[1](#)B. AMMAN 253

Classified By: DCM Greg Berry, per 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a February 2-3 visit to Amman, members of the interagency Humanitarian Planning Team (HPT) met with GOJ Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Shaher Al-Bak, JAF Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence Major General Mohamed-Majed Al-Eitan, the UN country team and the Hashemite Charitable Organization. In addition to briefing GOJ and UN interlocutors on the USG's regional humanitarian contingency plan (reported ref a), the HPT also discussed key difficulties in Jordan's humanitarian planning in the event of hostilities. Coordination between the UN and GOJ is being held up by GOJ financial requirements; GOJ operational planning is dominated by the military and does not yet have agreed mechanisms for dealing with the UN and NGO community; and the USG is still working to establish an appropriate civil-military coordination mechanism in Jordan, where most NGOs plan to base their regional operations. Although the GOJ was initially receptive to the possibility of setting up a joint USG-GOJ humanitarian operations center, the GOJ later informed post it could not participate in such a center due to political sensitivities. Similarly, although the GOJ has pledged that it would facilitate cross-border relief operations into Iraq, it has declined to discuss specific arrangements with the UN due to political sensitivities. Despite these significant obstacles to smooth planning and implementation, we are confident that the Jordanians are serious and committed to dealing with these critical humanitarian issues. Embassy Amman will continue to work with the GOJ, UN and CENTCOM to address these issues. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Humanitarian Planning Team Delegation included: PRM PDAS Rich Greene; Andy Wyllie, PRM/ANE; Helmut Reda, USMission Geneva/RMA, David Tarantino, OSD; Roger Corneretto, JCS; Major Ray Eiriz, CENTCOM. USAID/OFDA Disaster Assistance Response Team members Guy Lawson and David Hajjar also accompanied the team on its meetings, as did Amman-based Regional Refugee Coordinator and Amman's USAID Mission Director. The DCM and representatives from Amman's Defense Attache Office also joined some meetings.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs: GOJ
Needs Funds Now; Wants Help in NGO Screening

[1](#)3. (C) In a February 2 meeting, GOJ Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (and chair of the GOJ's Ministerial-level emergency preparedness policy committee) Shaher Al-Bak told the HPT that, in the event of hostilities in Iraq, the GOJ would allow a certain number of Iraqi refugees to enter Jordan on "humanitarian grounds." However, Bak cautioned that the international community must find a way to cover all financial costs related to any new refugee flows. Jordan had spent large sums of its own money to provide financial assistance to refugees and TCNs during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis and could not afford to do the same thing again. Greene responded that the U.S. recognizes there would be major financial needs in the event of hostilities in Iraq and has identified the resource requirements needed to replace the USD 400-500 million currently entering Iraq through the oil-for-food program. More immediately, the U.S. had just approved a USD 15 million drawdown of emergency humanitarian assistance funding that would allow UN agencies to preposition relief supplies; USAID had also provided another USD 10 million for similar purposes. The U.S. was also asking other nations to do the same.

[1](#)4. (C) Explaining that a "huge" number of NGOs currently seek permission to operate in Jordan -- both to provide assistance to new refugee populations here and as a basis for cross-border operations inside Iraq -- Bak asked for the USG's assistance in screening NGOs. Although the GOJ will set up procedures for expedited registration of new NGOs, it will need assistance in verifying NGOs' references, goals and bona fides. Greene responded that the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) could play a helpful role in providing references and additional background on NGOs seeking to work in Jordan.

GOJ Security Needs Will Remain Paramount

15. (C) Bak also emphasized that the GOJ's security needs will remain paramount in any humanitarian crisis. The GOJ will conduct a security check on every person who seeks refuge in Jordan. Some individuals, such as diplomats and documented citizens of the U.S. and European nations, would be easier to admit than others. Emphasizing that Jordan cannot afford to take security risks, Bak hinted that "certain groups" would be denied entry entirely. Greene urged the GOJ to conduct security checks as quickly as possible, noting that there is a direct link between provision of humanitarian assistance and overall stability.

GOJ Crisis Management Center: Planning for
TCNs and Refugees, With Security Screening

16. (C) General Mohamed-Majed Al-Eitan briefed the HPT February 2 on the GOJ's plans to establish a border screening facility and two camps (one for TCNs and another for refugees, each with a capacity of 25,000) at Ruweished, approximately 75 km from the Iraqi border, in the event of hostilities in Iraq. Should events warrant, the GOJ also had developed contingency plans to establish a camp for Iraqi asylum seekers and disarmed Iraqi soldiers at Nadayim airbase, just inside Iraqi territory. (Details of plan reported ref b.) Echoing comments made by Minister of State Shafer Al-Bak, Al-Eitan emphasized that Jordan needed financial help in order to respond to a new refugee crisis. Although the GOJ had held meetings with the UN and NGOs, no financial assistance from these organizations was yet forthcoming. The Jordan Armed Forces (JAF) already had spent 50,000 JD (roughly USD 70,000) on preparations for a refugee influx and needed new resources in order to continue its preparations. The JAF wanted to establish a camp for 5,000 refugees in order to be able to respond appropriately in the first 36-48 hours of any crisis but could not do so without funding. Al-Eitan hoped to finalize funding arrangements through a still-to-be-signed framework agreement with UNHCR.

17. (C) Al-Eitan told the HPT that GOJ security needs would remain paramount in the event of a refugee crisis. The GOJ expects a number of Iraqi military forces posted near the border to surrender immediately but, for security reasons, the GOJ will not allow any Iraqi soldiers to enter Jordan. Referring explicitly to Mujahadeen El-Khalq militants, Al-Eitan added that some other nationalities also would not be allowed to enter Jordan.

Cross Border Operations Dependent on
Iraqi Agreement, at least in Initial Stages

18. (C) Al-Eitan told Greene that, although the GOJ had a strong interest in facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance inside Iraq, the GOJ at least in the initial stages of a conflict would not be able to do anything inside Iraq without the approval of the Iraqi government. In the event of regime change or collapse, however, the GOJ "will do everything" to ensure provision of relief from Jordanian territory. Greene emphasized that rapid provision of humanitarian assistance inside Iraq would be key to maintaining stability inside Iraq and hence minimizing the displacement of Iraq's civilian population. Even before any change in regime, for example, the World Food Program likely would need authorization to trans-ship food assistance through Jordan. Al-Eitan agreed but again noted that the GOJ could not infringe on Iraq's sovereign authority as long as that authority remained intact. He suggested that coordination of cross-border humanitarian assistance under the auspices of the Jordan and Iraq Red Crescent Societies could be a useful approach.

GOJ Ready to Facilitate USG Humanitarian Assistance
But Civ-Mil Coordination Must be Low-Profile

19. (C) Al-Eitan told the HPT that he had been given instructions from "the most senior levels" to provide all necessary assistance and cooperation to U.S. Government humanitarian assistance efforts. He noted specifically that the DART's humanitarian assistance would be granted duty-free status both into and out of Jordan and offered to provide prefabricated storage space near the camp sites at Ruweished. General Al-Eitan asked that the US Government provide a liaison officer at both the JAF HQ and at the crisis management center's planned HQ at Ruweished. HPT members suggested that a more robust coordination mechanism, similar to the planned Humanitarian Operations Center in Kuwait,

would be more helpful than a sole liaison officer. Al-Eitan asked his staff officers to hold a follow-on discussion with the HPT on February 3.

10. (C) At the February 3 follow-on meeting, Al-Eitan's staff officers suggested that the Hashemite Charitable Organization (HCO), in its role as overall humanitarian coordinator for the GOJ, would be the best partner for a joint US-GOJ coordination structure. The HPT then held a separate meeting with HCO President Prince Rashid, where the HPT explained the US-GOJ Humanitarian Operations Center (HOC) and discussed ways in which a similar organization could be established in Jordan under the auspices of the HCO. Although Prince Rashid initially seemed receptive to the idea, he informed USAID Mission Director and DART members on February 4 that the HCO would not be able to host any USG military presence. The Prince said that the HCO Board of Trustees would not accept a US military presence "of any form" due to the Society's relationship with other Arab nations, who are key donors and also rely on the HCO to transport donated goods to the West Bank and Gaza. Prince Rashid emphasized that the HCO Board cannot allow the organization to be seen as in any way connected to the US military, as such a relationship would jeopardize the organization's role in Jordan as a neutral, charitable society. (Comment: Political sensitivities in Jordan may limit our ability to facilitate civ-mil coordination along the lines of the HOC in Kuwait. One short-term solution could be for the HOC to host a daily civ-mil briefing with US military participation. We will work with the UN, CENTCOM and the GOJ to set up an initial coordination mechanism that is agreeable to all and will develop plans for making this more robust as times goes by.)

UN Country Team: Focused on TCNs
But Also Planning for Refugees

11. (C) UN Resident Coordinator Christine McNab told the HPT that movement of third-country nationals (mostly Egyptians and Sudanese) from Iraq would be the UN's biggest responsibility in Jordan in the event of hostilities in Iraq. Jordan is the usual gateway for Egyptian and Sudanese laborers traveling to Iraq and the Gulf and the UN fully expects that they would seek to return through Jordan in the event of a crisis. IOM is planning to repatriate up to 60,000 TCNs, by sea (ferry service from Aqaba, Jordan to Nuweibeh, Egypt) and by air. IOM estimates that up to 50,000 Egyptians will seek repatriation through Jordan; while the remaining 10,000 will represent a mix of Sudanese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali and various South Asian citizens.

12. (C) McNab reported that UN planning figures for refugee flows toward Jordan are far less certain, as would-be refugees likely would be able to find easier routes out of Iraq but those routes may not be accessible during hostilities. The UN is using 35,000 refugees as its initial planning figure. Yet given GOJ concerns about internal stability and security, UNHCR is quite concerned about refugee access to Jordan. UNHCR Representative Sten Bronee reported that the GOJ has made it very clear that "undesirables" such as Iraqi soldiers or Iranian militants would not be welcome in Jordan. UNHCR plans to provide assistance to Iraqis held at the border who are denied entry to Jordan but has not been able to clarify who would have overall responsibility for the security of this area and these would-be refugees.

UN-GOJ Coordination Complicated

13. (C) The UN country team reported that humanitarian planning coordination within and with the GOJ is not consistent. While Minister of State Shaher Al-Bak is responsible for policy-level decisions, Minister of Planning Bassam Awadallah is responsible for securing funds for any GOJ humanitarian efforts -- a mandate that has proved a major obstacle to further GOJ preparations, pending a pledge of funds from the UN. (UNHCR Representative Sten Bronee later told refcoord that the UN would be unable to pledge funds to the GOJ, as none of the USD 15 million given by the US to UNHCR for preparations has been turned over to local UNHCR offices.) The Jordan Armed Forces' Crisis Management Center, led by General Al-Eitan, is responsible for operationalizing the GOJ's plan, but according to the UN is not driving the process consistently. The UN's key challenge, according to McNab, is how to encourage the GOJ to serve as a focal point for relief agencies and NGOs seeking to provide assistance in Jordan and use Jordan as a base for relief operations inside Iraq. OCHA Representative Daniel Augstburger noted that most NGOs seeking to work in and from Jordan have no legal presence here and that an expedited GOJ registration process is therefore essential. In addition, the GOJ needs to delegate some coordination responsibilities from the

Jordanian military to an appropriate (and sufficiently strong) civilian ministry.

GOJ Assurances But No Detail
on Cross-Border Operations

14. (C) McNab reported that GOJ Prime Minister Ali Abul Ragheb provided assurances to both UNDP and UNHCR that the GOJ would facilitate the provision of cross-border assistance into Iraq. However, given GOJ sensitivities about its political relationship with Iraq, the GOJ has not yet provided a detailed plan for the UN to actually deliver cross-border assistance. As the GOJ has a strong self-interest in maintaining stability inside Iraq, the UN is confident that the GOJ will in fact allow cross-border relief operations. But the lack of a concrete plan could pose major logistics problems if there is any break in the UN's Oil-for-Food pipeline.

Jordan Crucial Transport Corridor
for UN Staff in Iraq

15. (C) Finally, the UN country team in Jordan also has responsibility for the safe evacuation of 900 international UN staff from Iraq. The UN hopes that it would have adequate notice before the beginning of hostilities in order to evacuate staff overland through Jordan. Should the UN not have sufficient notice, it would be required to evacuate its staff by air. McNab noted that if there were any use of chemical or biological weapons inside Iraq, the UN would require U.S. military assistance in order to return its staff and restart its programs.

16. (U) PRM/ANE cleared this message for the HPT.

GNEHM